

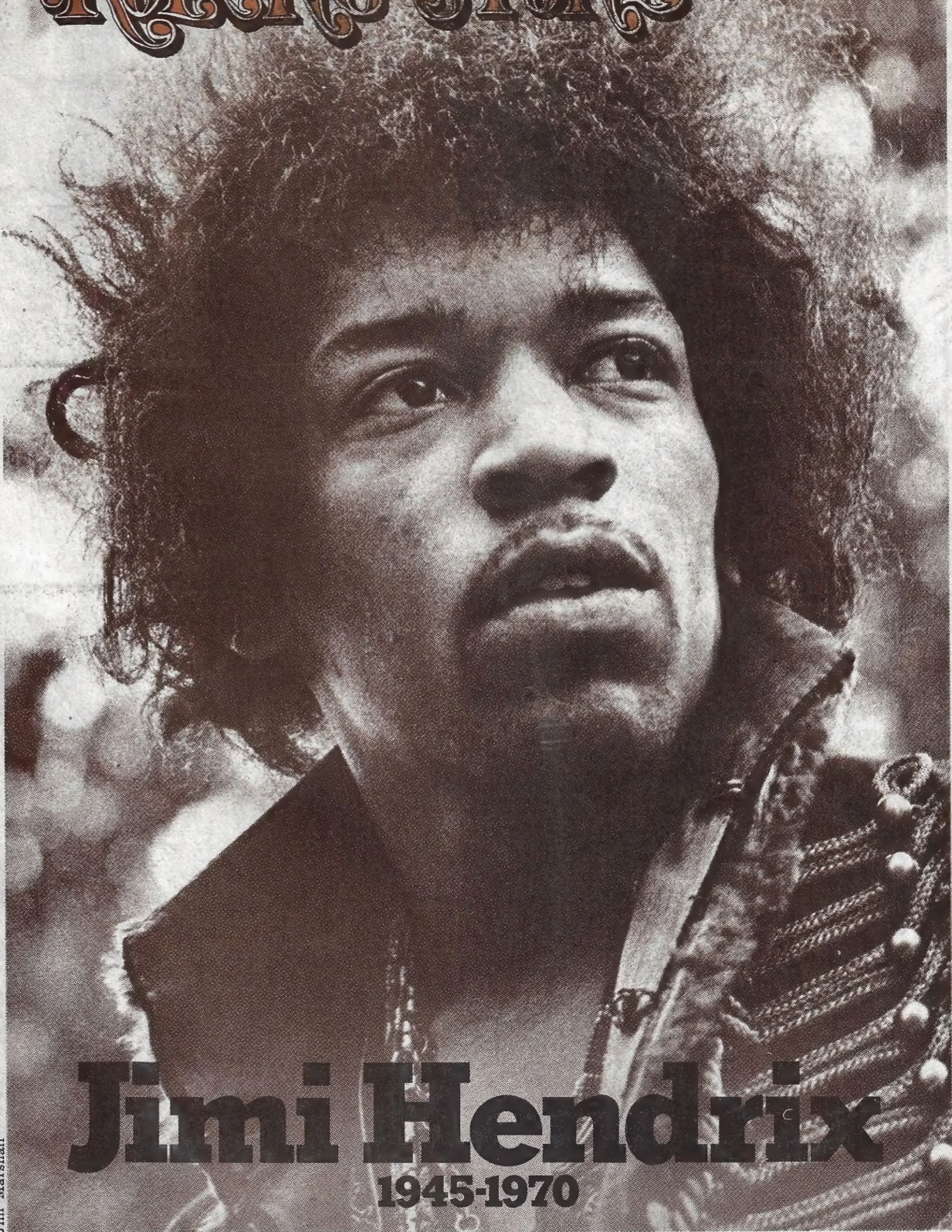
ROLLING STONE

OCTOBER 15, 1970

No. 69

UK: 3/-

50c



Jimi Hendrix
1945-1970

Jim Marshall



LONDON—Jimi Hendrix is dead at age 24.

The exact nature of the death is still vague, and a coroner's inquest is to be held in London September 30th. Police, however, say it was a drug overdose. They say he took nine sleeping pills and died of suffocation through vomit.

According to Eric Burdon, Hendrix left behind for the girlfriend in whose apartment he died what Burdon called a "suicide note" which was a poem several pages in length. The poem is now in the possession of Burdon, the last musician with whom Hendrix played before he died.

Said Burdon: "The poem just says the things Hendrix has always been saying, but to which nobody ever listened. It was a note of goodbye and a note of

hello. I don't think Jimi committed suicide in the conventional way. He just decided to exit when he wanted to."

Burdon went on BBC television September 21st—three days after Hendrix's death—to say Jimi "killed himself." He made no mention then of the poem he told ROLLING STONE about two days earlier. The inquest was to have been held September 23rd, but the day after Burdon appeared on television, it was postponed one week. (Burdon refuses to show the poem to anyone.)

"I don't believe it was suicide," answered Michael Jeffery, Jimi's personal manager. "I just don't believe Jimi Hendrix left Eric Burdon his legacy for him to carry on. Jimi Hendrix was a very unique individual."

"I've been going through a whole

stack of papers, poems and songs that Jimi had written, and I could show you 20 of them that could be interpreted as a suicide note," he continued.

Speaking with Jeffery on another phone extension, Michael Goldstein, Jimi's publicity agent, said, "A lot of foolish things will be said in the next few weeks by people who considered themselves close to Jimi Hendrix; they will not be saying them for Jimi; they will be saying them for themselves."

Both Jeffery and Goldstein said that Burdon was never that close to Hendrix, and also noted that Burdon and his current manager, Steve Gold, have a lawsuit in the courts against Jeffery, Burdon's former manager.

Hendrix had spent Thursday evening, September 17th, at the Samarkand Hotel

flat of Monika Danneman, a German painter. She found him in a coma Friday morning and called an ambulance. The ambulance rushed to the hotel on Landsdowne Crescent, in London's Nottinghill Gate district, and took him to St. Mary Abbot's Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival at 11:45 AM, London time.

Police said the sleeping pills were missing from a bottle in Miss Danneman's flat, which she had rented in mid-August for six weeks, and that Hendrix had taken some when he retired the night before. They took the rest of the pills as evidence.

Hendrix had been in Europe since he played the Isle of Wight Festival August 30th. That was his first British gig in

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Photographs by Jim Marshall

Jimi...

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two years, and the Jimi Hendrix Experience (with Billy Cox on bass and Mitch Mitchell on drums) had taken off almost immediately for a tour of the Continent. The tour was supposed to end in Rotterdam on September 14th, but that final date had been cancelled when Cox suffered a nervous breakdown and had to return to the States. Noel Redding, the original Experience bassist, was due to leave New York to join the group in London when word came of the death.

Jimi had been staying at the Cumberland Hotel off Park Lane since he arrived last month. He was due to check out after Wednesday night, but asked the manager instead to book him over one more evening. However, he didn't return Thursday night.

The last time he had appeared before an audience was Wednesday night, when he joined Burdon and War on stage at Ronnie Scott's Club in London for a jam session.

"I know he had been in a bad state for a year," said Burdon. "He came out of his shell on Tuesday and came over to the club and asked if he could play with us the next night, the 16th, which he did. At first he played like an amateur, real bad, using stage tricks to cover up. Then he came on with a solo which was up to scratch, and the audience dug it. He went off stage and came back, playing the background to 'Tobacco Road.'" That song was his last.

Hendrix had been for some time attempting to become more independent in his business affairs. He saw Electric Lady as a step toward that goal. Burdon says that a week before Hendrix died, Jimi told him he was going to get new management.

"Numerous amounts of times he complained about his managers, I'd have to say he did," said Buddy Miles, who played with Hendrix in the Band of Gypsies. "I ain't gonna lie and say I don't know, because I was with him a lot and got to him in ways lots of others didn't."

"The few good things Jimi got, he really deserved. Even more things, as far as I'm concerned. When I left the Band of Gypsies, I know Jimi was extremely unhappy," Miles added.

"He never said to me he wanted to change management," Jeffery replied to these statements. "What happened was,

both of us were expanding in areas, and at certain times he needed very close attention. There was a time when he wanted to expand the group, and the thing was, half my energies were in the studio and other things, and I didn't have time to devote energies fully to helping expand the group.

"Both he and I felt that the three-way function of manager - artist - agent was quite likely to fall apart, because the times are different than they once were in show business. People outside the circle mistook this for discontent, but it wasn't, because Jimi was intelligent and bright enough. If he wanted to split, he would have split.

"As far as being artistically frustrated, Jimi had an incredible genius about him, and the common thing with most artists of that caliber is that they are constantly artistically frustrated," Jeffery added.

"He told everybody different things. He was that way. Always changing his mind," Burdon said over the weekend. "Hendrix was in a such a deep well that the only way out was to stop playing music and try to clear up the mess. But he knew that without music he would be destroyed anyway. He realized that the only thing to do was to keep on playing and died anyway because he was being stifled creatively.

"He realized that the only way he could get what he wanted, helping the Panthers, and setting up an anti-ghetto project in Harlem, was to die and hope that someone else would take care of the business for him using the things that he left behind, his music and his last poem, to make the money," stated Burdon.

Jimi's affairs were in a state of confusion at the time. At one point his road manager, Jerry Stickles, said that the day Hendrix died, he (Stickles) had called Dick Katz, his European agent, to tell him that Jimi wanted to do another European tour and a British tour as soon as possible. Katz lined up a German tour and some British dates that day before he heard the news, according to Stickles.

At another point, however, Stickles said that at Jimi's request he made airline reservations to return to the States September 21st, because Jimi wanted to finish up some recording for a new album by the Experience. (All that needed to be done on that album was the mastering, which Hendrix was going

to do himself at Electric Lady.)

None of Jimi's friends or associates except Burdon, at first, would discuss the matter, and in the absence of a complete report, the London press chose to carry instead pure sensationalism. One Sunday paper had an "exclusive story" by a groupie which told of five-in-a-bed orgies with Hendrix.

In America, the first report—spread across the country primarily by FM radio within hours after his death—was that Hendrix had died of a heroin overdose. American newspapers generally carried the story of his death on the front page Friday afternoon and Saturday morning.

September 26th, Radio Geronimo in England played unreleased Hendrix material the entire evening, including a tape of Jimi with Buddy Miles and the Last Poets, and another unreleased live album.

The funeral was to have been Monday, September 28th, in Jimi's hometown of Seattle, Washington.

James Marshall Hendrix was born November 27th, 1945. On the day of his death, his father, James, a landscape architect, talked about his son's childhood. The Hendrix family lives in a simple house with lawn and garden in the better part of Seattle's black neighborhood, near Lake Washington. The mantel is covered with pictures, guitar straps, magazine clips, and other evidence of Jimi's illustrious career. Mr. Hendrix has remarried, and has two daughters by that second marriage. He also has a 22-year-old son, Leon, by the first marriage.

The last time the family saw Jimi was on July 26th, the day after Leon began doing time for grand larceny. As always when he was in Seattle, Jimi stayed at the Hendrix house that weekend.

Mr. Hendrix recalled that Jimi first became interested in music when he was 10 years old. His father remembers going into Jimi's room one night in the dark and tripping over a broom. He asked Jimi why the broom was there, since he obviously wasn't using it to clean up his room.

"That's my guitar, Dad," Jimi had answered. "I'm learning how to play it."

When he was 11, his father bought him a cheap acoustic guitar, and at 12, Jimi got his first electric guitar. He

learned quickly, and was playing in bands at 13. When he was 14, that first electric guitar (inscribed "Jimmy") was stolen, and he was unable to replace it until his sophomore year at Garfield High.

Members of Jimi's bands were quite surprised when he became a star, because he seemed the least likely person in any of his groups to make it. He was then only an average musician, and gave no indication of the almost compulsive creativity that he showed later. He was also known for being very shy and reserved. He displayed no stage presence at all.

Jimi quit Garfield High in the middle of his senior year and went to work as a handyman for his father, who was then doing mostly gardening and lawn jobs. One day as they were working, Jimi told his father that he felt the work was a drag, and that he'd just decided to join the Army instead. This was in 1963.

He left Seattle within a few days and joined the 101st Airborne Division, stationed in the South. His father remembers going into Jimi's room right after he left, seeing the guitar, and expressing surprise that Jimi hadn't taken it with him. Sure enough, a few days later he got a call from Jimi, who said the Army was driving him mad and he needed his guitar "right away."

Except for a photo he received in the mail, that was the last time Mr. Hendrix heard from his son until Jimi reached England in 1966. He had been discharged from the military after 14 months when he suffered a back injury in a parachute jump, and he'd spent the next couple of years criss-crossing the United States, playing with more than 40 rhythm and blues groups. Using the name Jimmy James, he played for six months with a New York group called the Blue Flames. At various times, he backed Little Richard, Jackie Wilson, the Isley Brothers, and Wilson Pickett.

"I got tired of feeding back 'In the Midnight Hour,'" he told an interviewer in 1968. "I was a backing musician playing guitar."

He also played with a group called Curtis Knight and the Squires, and, after he became a star in 1967, Capitol Records embarrassed him by releasing an album called *Got That Feeling: Jimi Hendrix Plays, Curtis Knight Sings*, an album that was poorly recorded and





of no historical value. It revealed only traces of the Hendrix artistry. Hendrix said: "The Curtis Knight album was from bits of tape they used from a jam session, bits of tape, tiny little confetti bits of tapes . . . it was done. Capitol never told us they were going to release that crap. That's the real drag about it. It shows exactly how some people in America are still not where it's at, regardless. You don't have no friend scenes, sometimes makes you wonder. That cat and I used to really be friends. Plus I was just at a jam session and here they just try to connive and cheat and use. It was really a bad scene."

In 1966, he was playing (and, for the first time, singing) with a group at the Cafe Wha? on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village when Chas Chandler, then the bass player with the Animals, walked in. Chandler was enthusiastic about Hendrix, who had assembled this group only two months before, but Jimi expressed doubts about his own musical ability and about Chandler's claim that he could become a star. Two weeks later, after a quick tour with the Animals, Chandler returned to New York, confirmed his first impressions, and talked Hendrix into going back to England with him. This was in September, 1966.

A few days later, James Hendrix, Sr., received a phone call at about 4 A.M.

"It's me, Jimi. I'm in England, Dad," said the voice at the other end of the line. "I met some people and they're going to make me a big star. We changed my name to J-m-i."

Surprised, his father asked why he'd changed his name, and Jimi replied that it was "just to be different." Mr. Hendrix remembers telling Jimi that if he was really coming from London, the call was going to be very expensive. They both started crying over the phone. "We were both so excited I forgot to even tell him I'd married," his father says.

Once in England, Hendrix formed a new band. Noel Redding, who had come to audition as guitarist in the Animals, met Hendrix through Chandler. "Can you play bass?" was the first thing Jimi asked Redding. He never had before, but he immediately became bassist, and sometimes-guitarist, with the Jimi Hendrix Experience. Mitch Mitchell, another Englishman, was picked as drummer.

Six weeks after he left New York, four days after forming his trio, Hendrix opened at the Olympia in Paris, on the bill with French pop star Johnny Halliday. He reminisced about it for an interviewer in 1968:

"Paris Olympia is worse than playing the Apollo. Four days after we got together, we were playing the Olympia. It is the biggest thing in Europe. The reception was great and we played four songs. We were trying to get together. We did everything. We never played these songs except once in Germany. We got together with 'Midnight Hour,' 'Land of 1000 Dances,' 'Everyone Needs Someone to Love,' and 'Respect.'"

They took off on a tour of Europe. Eight days after the Beach Boys broke an attendance record by playing to 7000 in two shows at the Tivoli in Stockholm, the Experience drew 14,500 for two shows. They became the second group (the Rolling Stones were the first) to sell out the Sports Arena in Copenhagen. At the Seville Theater in London, they were the first act ever to sell out both shows, and, when a return engagement was booked a month later, tickets sold out the day they became available. The Jimi Hendrix Experience was, as the European press said, "an overnight smash."

Now it was time to return to America. With several hit singles and a successful album in Europe behind him, Hendrix made his U.S. debut in 1967 at the Monterey International Pop Festival. Few in the audience knew that, until nine months ago, Hendrix had lived his whole life in this country. Few knew anything about him except that this "freaky black English bluesman" was making his "American debut."

Lou Adler, with John Phillips, co-producer of the festival, said he heard of Hendrix from Paul McCartney—"He told me about some guy in England playing guitar with his teeth." Adler decided on Hendrix and the Who as the "new" acts to be introduced to the Monterey audience.

In the liner notes to the live recording of Jimi's performance (ironically, it was the last Hendrix recording to be released before his death), Pete Johnson of Warner Brothers writes what happened:

"Their appearance at the festival was magical; the way they looked, the way they performed and the way they sound-

ed were light years away from anything anyone had seen before. The Jimi Hendrix Experience owned the future, and the audience knew it in an instant."

Another ironic note was the presence of Jimi's R&B counterpart, the late Otis Redding, whose own Monterey performance is coupled with Hendrix's on the new album.

And yet another fallen star was at Monterey—Brian Jones, who attended the festival with Nico and spent most of his time as a spectator, seated in the press section. Adler recalled: "Brian was over here for his own pleasure, but he went up on stage and introduced one of the English acts—either Jimi or the Who." Hendrix was on the same bill as the Who and the Mamas and the Papas. His next performance would be at the Hollywood Bowl with the Mamas and the Papas.

The stories that came out about Hendrix after Monterey were enough to shoot him straight to the top, just like in Europe. "Purple Haze" became a hit single, *Are You Experienced?* a hit album. The Jimi Hendrix Experience, electric hair and all, was taking America by storm.

But if the audience knew just where Jimi Hendrix was at, the same can't be said of the music business brains. In one of those showbiz anomalies, the Experience took off on a tour, second-billed to the Monkees, playing to the kiddies. When a promoter complained (under pressure from the Daughters of the American Revolution) that their stage act was "too sexy," the Experience refused to modify it, instead dropping out of that tour and packing houses on one of their own.

Monterey was where Jimi introduced his guitar-burning bit, and by now he was finding it necessary to explain: "At the Monterey Festival, I decided to destroy my guitar at the end of the song. It was a painted guitar, I'd just finished painting it that day and was really into it. I had my little bag on stage, carried everything in it including kerosene for my lighter which was given to me by Chas at Christmas. I destroyed my guitar again in Washington, D.C. It was accidental."

"I think of people who say that setting your guitar on fire has nothing to do with the music as cellophane, bags and bags of cellophane. Of cellophane but in bags of cellophane. Have you ever

thought of lighting cellophane on fire? There's no need to."

The British pop magazine *Disc* voted him Musician of the Year for 1967, as did the pop newspaper *Melody Maker*. In 1968—by which time each of his first three albums were gold—he was named Performer of the Year by *Rolling Stone*.

When Jimi made his triumphant return to Seattle early in 1968, he received a key to the city and an honorary diploma from Garfield High. His father was floored when he saw Jimi in purple velvet cape and rainbow shirt. Not only did the elder Hendrix not realize how big a star Jimi had become, but he remembered his son as a conservative dresser with a subdued, reserved personality.

But if Hendrix was a brash dresser, if his stage act was pure mayhem, he also had a distinct ambivalence toward being a rock and roll star. Onstage, he was what every mother feared when she expressed doubts about rock and roll's effect on her daughter. Offstage, he remained the same quiet, boyish, seemingly vulnerable Jimi Hendrix as always.

The ambivalence became more noticeable in 1969, his most unproductive year. Hendrix became more uncommunicative, more withdrawn, and the Experience broke up. Noel Redding had his own group, Fat Mattress, and Jimi was saying little to anyone.

In May, he was up for his first, and only, dope bust. It came as he was crossing the border into Canada; the charge was possession of heroin and hashish. Hendrix claimed he didn't know what was in the bag, that a fan had given it to him a few days earlier, and he had packed it without looking to see what it was.

At his trial last December, he said he had tried just about everything from grass to cocaine—but never heroin—a few times, and that he had "outgrown" dope of any kind. The trial lasted three days, and the jury found him innocent of both charges.

Still, through most of last summer, he kept himself out of the public eye. Billy Cox, an old Army buddy, was announced as his new bass player, and Mitchell stayed on. Jimi spent most of the summer with an "electric family" of musicians—everyone from old bluesmen to avant garde classical composers—in upstate New York. He questioned wheth-

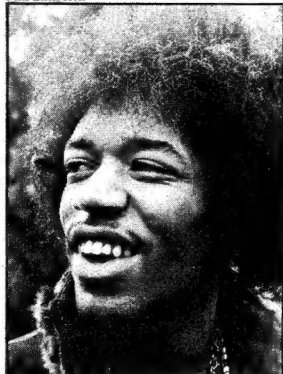
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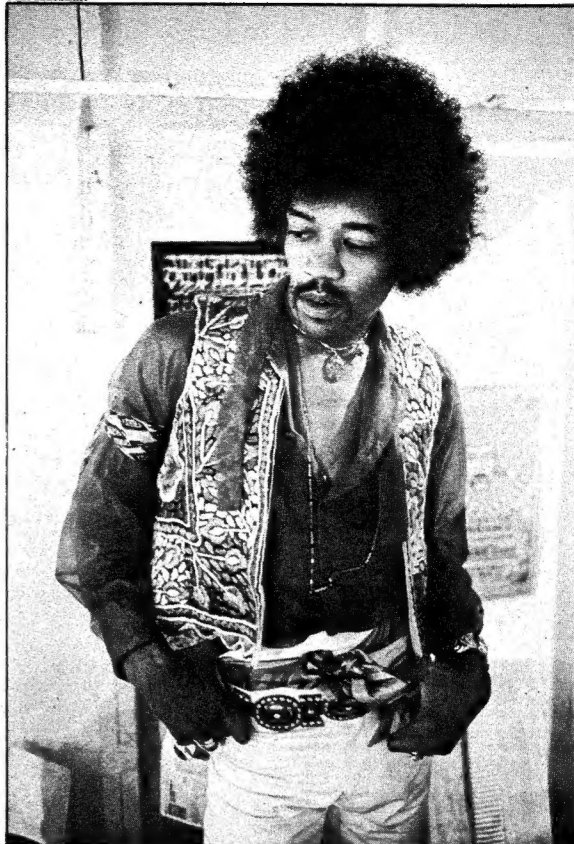
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Jim Marshall



er he was taken seriously by other musicians. He said the new "family" was going to do what he called, for lack of a better term, "sky church music" and that the group would have other singers and songwriters.

"I don't want to be a clown anymore," Jimi told one interviewer. "I don't want to be a rock and roll star."

But the musical family didn't work out, and when Hendrix surfaced again, it was New Year's Eve at the Fillmore East and he was playing with Cox and old friend Buddy Miles on drums. This was *A Band of Gypsies*. Bill Graham danced in the stage wings during their set, then personally went up to the dressing room to tell Hendrix it was the best music he'd ever heard in his hall.

Although all but the Curtis Knight albums were on Warner-Reprise, Jimi still owed Capitol one album through an old contract deal. He gave them the *Band of Gypsies* album, although in later interviews he revealed he wasn't completely satisfied with the performance because his guitar was out of tune. Stylistically, the music was close to the "Purple Haze" days, and Hendrix had merely stood on stage and casually played his guitar, with none of the old gyrations.

Just a couple weeks later, at the Moratorium concert in Madison Square Garden, he put down his guitar in the middle of the second song, said "We're not quite getting it together," and walked off the stage. He was depressed about the new group. The music just wasn't right, and soon he was back with the original Experience.

In an interview given at that time, Jimi explained what had happened to the Gypsies: "Maybe I just started noticing the guitar for a change. It's like the end of a beginning maybe or something. I figure that Madison Square Garden is like the end of a big long fairy tale. Which is great. I think it's like the best ending I could possibly have come up with."

"The *Band of Gypsies* was outsize as far as I'm concerned. It was just . . . going through head changes is what it was. I really couldn't tell—I don't know: I was very tired. You know, sometimes there's a lot of things that add up in your head about this and that and they might hit you at a very peculiar time, which happened to be at a peace rally, you know? And here I'd been fighting the biggest war I ever fought. In my

life. Inside, you know? And like that wasn't the place to do it."

Supposedly, things were to be better than ever with the Experience together again, but that didn't turn out to be true. Relationships between the three weren't entirely patched up, and for the rest of this year he played with Mitchell and either Cox or Redding.

One of the last interviews Jimi Hendrix gave was to *Melody Maker*, the British pop newspaper, around the time of the Isle of Wight. Jimi told reporter Roy Hollingworth about his fear that Europeans didn't regard him as they used to.

"While I was doing my vanishing act in the States I got this feeling that I was completely blown out of England. I thought they had forgotten me over here. I'd given them everything I'd got, I thought maybe they didn't want me anymore, because they had a nice set of bands. Maybe they were saying, oh, we've had Hendrix, yeah, he was okay. I really thought I was completely through here," he said.

Jimi was pleased to find he was wrong, that they still liked him in Europe, and the interview ended with him stressing, "I'm happy, it's gonna be good."

Hendrix explained that he had been . . . thinking about the future. Thinking that this era of music—sparked off by the Beatles—had come to an end. Something new has got to come, and Jimi Hendrix will be there.

"I want a big band. I don't mean three harps and 14 violins. I mean a big band full of competent musicians that I can conduct and write for. And with the music we will paint pictures of earth and space, so that the listener can be taken somewhere."

"It's going to be something that will open up a new sense in people's minds. They are getting their minds ready now. Like me, they are going back home, getting fat, and making themselves ready for the next trip."

"You see, music is so important. I don't any longer dig the pop and politics crap. That's old-fashioned. It was somebody's personal opinion. But politics is old hat. Anyone can go around shaking babies by the hand and kissing the mothers, and saying that it was groovy. But you see, you can't do this in music. Music doesn't lie. I agree it can be misinterpreted, but it doesn't lie."

"When there are vast changes in the way the world goes, it's usually something like art and music that changes it. Music is going to change the world next time."

"We are going to stand still for a while, and gather everything we've learned musically in the last 30 years, and we are going to blend all the ideas that worked into a new form of classical music. It's going to take some doing to figure out all the things that worked, but it's going to be done."

"I dig Strauss and Wagner—those cats are good, and I think that they are going to form the background of my music. Floating in the sky above it will be blues—I've still got plenty of blues—and then there will be Western sky music and sweet opium music (you'll have to bring your own opium) and these will be mixed together to form one."

"You know the drug scene came to a big head. It was opening up things in people's minds, giving them things that they just couldn't handle. Well, music can do that, you know, and you don't need any drugs."

"The term 'blowing someone's mind' is valid. People like you to blow their minds, but then we are going to give them something that will blow their mind, and while it's blown, there will be something to fill the gap. It's going to be a complete form of music," he had said.

An Appreciation

BY JOHN BURKS

It was at the Monterey Pop Festival that Jimi Hendrix first appeared before an American audience—he even burned a guitar, a heavy routine during those innocent days of 1967—and, in one of those terrible ironies Warner Brothers Records must dread, the LP (with Otis Redding on the flip side) was released just a week before Jimi's death. The worst of it was the poster that came along with this historic Monterey recording: it showed photos of both Redding (who died a few months after Monterey) and Hendrix with the line "AT LAST" underneath. Ominous?

It was a touch that probably would have given—or maybe is giving—the voodoo child a smile. An enigmatic smile.

In 1967, Hendrix burst onto the rock and roll scene not initially because of his

music—sure, it was far out, but the most significant thing was the Hendrix Presence. The sexual savage electric dandy rock and roll nigger Presence! The voodoo child run wild in electric ladyland!

Fully aware that this would be Jimi's best starting image, his first LP and singles were heavy on Presence, light on his (ultimately) strongest facet. It was through live performances and the later recordings that the rock and roll audience was to discover his greatly more astounding side: he was perhaps the master virtuoso of electric guitar. It was Jimi Hendrix, more than any other guitarist, who brought the full range of sound from all the reaches of serious electronic music—a wider palette of sound than any other performing instrumentalist in the history of music ever had at his fingertips—plus the fullest tradition of black music—from Charley Patton and Louis Armstrong all the way to John Coltrane and Sun Ra—to rock and roll. Nobody could doubt that Jimi Hendrix was a rock and roll musician, yet, to jazz musicians and jazz fans, he was also a jazz performer. When Jimi Hendrix took a solo, it had everything in it.

It is only three years and three months since his Monterey performance. Most master musicians are granted a good deal more time to make their statement. (Charlie Parker lived 35 years.) The amazing thing is how rich a musical legacy Hendrix has left in so short a time.

Certainly there is a place in the chapter on rock and roll lyrics (in the *Whole History of Rock and Roll*, to be published a few years hence, when the whole trip is dead) for Jimi. It's not just that he was adept at slinging the words together. But clearly Hendrix has got to be viewed as the father of Narcotic Fantasy imagery. This was his role as a lyricist at the start of his career. It was important to the voodoo child image that his songs came off as far out as possible, and how are you going to come off farther out than by asking your listeners to "Scuse me while I kiss the sky . . . don't know if I'm comin' up or down . . ."? What about "Queen Jealousy, Envy, waits behind him, waits behind him, her fiery green gown sneers at the grassy ground"?

There was a much more direct side to Jimi's poetry. "I'm not the only soul who's accused of hit and run," he sang to his old lady on "Crosstown Traffic." "Tire tracks all across your back—I can

